CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETY-FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 14 March 1989, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Chusei Yamada (Japan)

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The PRESIDENT: The 494th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is called to order.

Twenty-seven years ago today, on 14 March, the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum which has been meeting without interruption since then held its first plenary meeting at the Foreign Minister level. Known at the beginning as the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament, it was later renamed Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. Its procedural and organizational arrangements were certainly different from those which guide our work at present. Yet it was, at that time, a welcome development after almost two years without multilateral negotiations on disarmament.

During those 27 years, several important multilateral disarmament agreements have been negotiated here in Geneva - the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Sea-bed Treaty, the Convention banning biological and toxin weapons and the Convention on environmental modification for hostile purposes. The ENDC also contributed significantly to the conclusion, in 1963, of the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water. These agreements, together with others also negotiated in multilateral forums, such as the Antarctic Treaty, the outer space Treaty, the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, the Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons, represent a substantial body of international law in the field of disarmament. Together with bilateral agreements reached by the two big Powers and other nations, they perform the essential function of excluding certain areas, arms or activities from the arms race. However, it is clear that we are far from having succeeded in either stopping or reversing it.

Much remains to be done at all levels, and we, the members of the Conference on Disarmament and the non-members participating in it, have a heavy responsibility in advancing our negotiations to achieve new effective and verifiable disarmament measures. That responsibility assumes particular relevance at present, when the international situation shows considerable improvement and multilateral forums are proving once more that they are indispensable instruments in the search for disarmament. Clear indications in that respect appeared at the last regular session of the General Assembly. The success of the Paris Conference in recognizing the importance and continuing validity of the Geneva Protocol of 1925, as well as in providing further impetus to our negotiations on a comprehensive chemical weapons ban, is a timely example of the irreplaceable role of the multilateral approach to disarmament. Last but not least, this year we have welcomed in our midst an unprecedented number of non-member States wishing to participate in the work of the Conference. Twenty-four States have been invited to join us in dealing with the issues facing this multilateral body.

The 1989 session of the Conference has begun on a positive note. A number of organizational questions have been settled quickly. Five subsidiary bodies are working under their competent chairmen and, as requested by the Paris Conference, the Conference is redoubling its efforts in the field of chemical weapons. However, we should not forget that several agenda items and other subjects still need to find an appropriate organizational framework for

(The President)

their consideration. This applies in particular to the nuclear issues on our agenda, agenda items 1 to 3. Among those, I would like to single out agenda item 1, "Nuclear test ban", on which we have not been able, unfortunately, to find an acceptable arrangement since the end of 1983. I have initiated with our co-ordinators the process of exploring possible progress on the item, and I am very encouraged by the positive response. I assure you that I will continue to intensify my consultations and to co-operate with you in the search for a solution to those pending matters.

In conformity with its programme of work, the Conference starts today its consideration of agenda item 3, entitled "Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters". However, in accordance with rule 30 of its rules of procedure, any member wishing to do so may raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference. I have on my list of speakers for today the representative of Indonesia. I now call upon Ambassador Loeis.

Mr. LOEIS (Indonesia): It is indeed a pleasure for me and my delegation to see you, Sir, a personal friend and a representative of Japan, with which my country enjoys an excellent relationship, presiding over the deliberations of the Conference for the month of March. You may rest assured that the Indonesian delegation will extend its fullest co-operation to you in the discharge of your duties. My delegation also wishes to reiterate its appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Pugliese, for the commendable stewardship that he gave to our Conference last month.

Ideally, every year the Conference should end its deliberation on organizational matters in the month of February, and intensive negotiations should have begun in the month of March on substantive issues pertaining to all items on its agenda. The fact that the Conference is still not able to begin negotiation on its priority agenda items, such as the nuclear test ban, should be a source of deep concern, especially at a time when enthusiasm for disarmament and co-operation is on the rise. Now that the Conference is already in the midst of its spring session, I wish to join others in making some brief remarks on the subject.

Seven years ago, under the chairmanship of your delegation and with the help of Ambassador Jaipal, the then Secretary of the Committee on Disarmament, the Committee was successful in establishing a subsidiary body on the nuclear test ban with a mandate acceptable to all delegations. That success was achieved at a time quite different from now, marked by the intensified arms race and confrontation. Logically, the present political climate should have made it easier for the Conference to achieve a consensus. Unfortunately, such was not the case, and it would perhaps be too much to hope that the Conference could repeat that success during this spring session, as we are now almost in the second half of the month of March. Nevertheless, even at the risk that it may perhaps sound pointless, but given the highest importance attached by my delegation, as well as by your own, to the need to end nuclear testing once and for all, I would like to reiterate the appeal for the demonstration of "political will" from all sides so that the Conference can fully discharge its responsibility to conclude a comprehensive test-ban treaty as soon as possible. I am fully convinced that until such a treaty is concluded, this appeal, which has been made by many in the past, will be repeated again in the future.

(Mr. Loeis, Indonesia)

Much has been said concerning the importance of having a comprehensive test-ban treaty. It is the litmus test of nations' willingness to stop and reverse the nuclear arms race and move towards general and complete disarmament, which, according to paragraph 111 of the Final Document of the first special session on disarmament, will permit States to have at their disposal only non-nuclear forces. We are told that there is no such thing as peaceful nuclear explosions, and thus article V of the 1968 non-proliferation Treaty, which provides the basis for international co-operation in sharing the benefits stemming from peaceful applications of nuclear explosions, has become a dead letter. From this premise a conclusion can accordingly be drawn that the continuation of nuclear testing is tantamount to permitting the continuation of the proliferation of nuclear weapons either quantitatively or qualitatively, or even perhaps for the purpose of inventing a new generation of weapons. If such is the case, the continuation of nuclear testing, and the refusal to continue negotiations to ban such testing, run counter, if not to the letter, at least to the spirit of the 1963 partial test-ban Treaty as well as the 1968 non-proliferation Treaty. As we can see, the nuclear test-ban treaty is not only important to end testing itself, but also has wider implications for the disarmament process as a whole. It is for these reasons that Indonesia, together with Mexico, Peru, Sri Lanka, Yugoslavia and Venezuela, has proposed amending the parial test-ban Treaty to make it a comprehensive one.

As far as Indonesia is concerned, we gave up our nuclear options 19 years ago by signing the NPT. Indonesia has agreed since the very beginning of the existence of the Conference to make a nuclear test ban a priority and the first item on the agenda of the Conference. Consequently, my delegation is ready to establish the necessary subsidiary body with the responsibility of concluding a comprehensive test-ban treaty as a matter of urgency. The Indonesian delegation has also approached the "mandate problem" with a sufficient degree of flexibility. Although we are ready to embark on a full-fledged negotiation to conclude a comprehensive test-ban treaty, we none the less supported the mandate contained in document CD/291 in 1982, which accommodated the wishes of those who were not ready to negotiate. As we all know, it was with this mandate that the subsidiary body was established and discussed specific issues - verification and compliance - with a view to making further progress toward a nuclear test ban.

Today, it is very clear that the problem of verification is not the insurmountable obstacle it was pictured to be. To put it more succinctly, verification of compliance is possible, and the so-called problem of on-site inspection has become a matter of the past. With these developments and within the prevailing international political environment, the Conference should have been able to negotiate a comprehensive test-ban treaty or at least work on the basis of the mandate contained in document CD/829, which my delegation believes is sufficient to accommodate those who are still not able to carry out a full-fledged negotiation.

My delegation is ready to co-operate and find a way out of the current impasse, and search for a mandate which provides a sound basis for well-structured deliberations where the result will be recorded in a formal document ensuring continuity and consistency of efforts towards the conclusion

(Mr. Loeis, Indonesia)

of a comprehensive test-ban treaty. Any mandate which is less than that, I am afraid, may inadvertently compromise the prestige of this Conference as a negotiating body, converting it into just another round-table seminar. I am convinced that none of us would wish that to happen.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Loeis of Indonesia for his statement, and for the very kind words he addressed to me and to my country. I have no other speakers on my list for today. May I ask whether any other delegation wishes to take the floor at this stage? There seems to be none.

Today, on behalf of the Conference, I would like to bid farewell to an esteemed and competent colleague - present at this plenary meeting - who is leaving us this week after seven years of hard and effective work in the Conference, although his country is not yet one of its members. I refer to Mr. Sten Lundbo, who will shortly take up the important post of Deputy Director-General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oslo. His dedication and diplomatic skills are an example of how influential and full of opportunities the activities of a non-member can be. On behalf of the Conference, I wish him and his wife every success. In my capacity as Japanese delegate, I hope that the day will come soon when his country will join this Conference as a full member.

As I have no other business for today, I now intend to adjourn this plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 16 March, at 10.a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.